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On the Cover: Senior Kayla Wells poses after cutting down the nets following the ladies SEC championship win over South Carolina. (Inset picture) Coach Gary Blair celebrates his first SEC regular season title! Photos by Rob Havens '88

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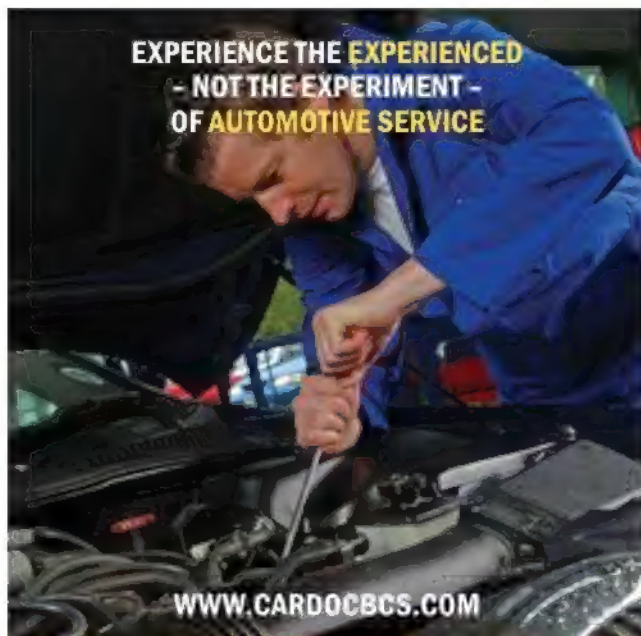
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Howdy Ags!

It's about to be spring time in Aggieland, and although we are still fighting a worldwide pandemic, there are definitely signs that we are headed in the right direction. COVID-19 has affected several of our programs, and men's basketball has arguably been affected most, as they lost the whole month of February to safety protocols that eliminated games and practices. Our guys continued to work hard and battle, but their season came to an end after the first game of the SEC tournament. Even after a tough loss, Emanuel Miller said it is a blessing to be able to play during a pandemic. He also promised that the Aggies would be back, that they would bounce back and be a lot better team next year.

Our women's basketball team provided excitement and hope to all of our programs as they navigated through a full season of games. They only missed out playing Vandy, after the school opted out of the season with COVID-19 issues and a weather cancellation vs Mizzou. The Aggies went 22-1 overall in the regular season and captured the SEC Regular Season Championship, going 13-1 in the conference.

The ladies brought in the largest crowd of the season to watch them battle against one of the best teams in the country, South Carolina, to take the crown. For about two and a half hours, we were able to forget about COVID-19 and watch our girls go out there and fight for a championship.

It was so amazing to watch the celebration afterwards as the ladies rejoiced under a shower of confetti! They made snow angels on the court and climbed the ladder to cut down the nets. It was such a great reminder of how important sports are to us and how they can brighten our lives. Our ladies sacrificed a lot to stay safe and follow protocols to bring home a championship for Texas A&M. We want to congratulate the players, coaches and staff for the hard work and dedication it took to win an SEC title. We are excited to share their story in this issue! Way to go Champs!

Gig'em Ags!

Rob '88



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Aggieland Illustrated is an independently owned, Aggie owned and operated publication and in no way reflects the views or opinions of Texas A&M University.

Aggieland Illustrated (ISSN 1932-9105) is published six times a year in the United States by Aggieland Illustrated, PO Box 6841, Bryan, TX 77805-6841. Reproduction or use of editorial or graphics content in any manner without permission is prohibited. Photographs and manuscripts for publication are welcome but will not be returned unless accompanied by a self-addressed, stamped envelope.

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Volume 15, Number 4

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PROUD AGGIE MOM

...miller time

Bryce Miller struck out 15 New Mexico State Aggies in seven innings of work en route to a 5-0 win for Texas A&M. The outing earned him the SEC Pitcher of the Week award, and he was also recognized by Collegiate Baseball as one of their National Players of the Week. The fifteen strikeouts were the most by an Aggie since the 1998 season when Casey Fossum did it. Photo by Rob Havens '88



snapshot



snapshot





...bama kill

Sophomore outside hitter Lauren Davis outleaps two Bama blockers for the kill in the Aggies 3-1 win over The Tide. It was the first home match in Reed for Texas A&M Volleyball since the spring semester began. The second set went back and forth with 19 ties and seven lead changes before Lauren's kill and a service ace by Camille Conner clinched the set 26-24. The Aggies went on to close out the match in the fourth set 25-17. Photo by Rob Havens '88

snapshot





...goodbye mr spalding

Haley Lee is punishing opposing pitchers over at Davis Diamond and the rest of the country is getting a look. The power hitting Junior from Kingwood, Texas has hit three home runs in a game twice already this season, including a walk-off grand slam that made SportsCenter's Top 10 Plays. She is currently hitting .467 with 9 homeruns and 18 RBI's, proving the fans chant that a "Walk is Cheaper" when you face her!

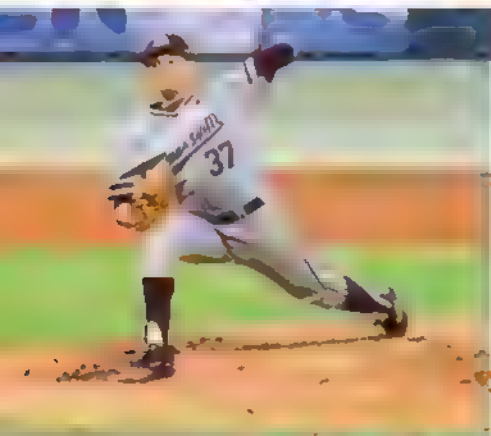
Photo by Rob Havens '88





...national champion

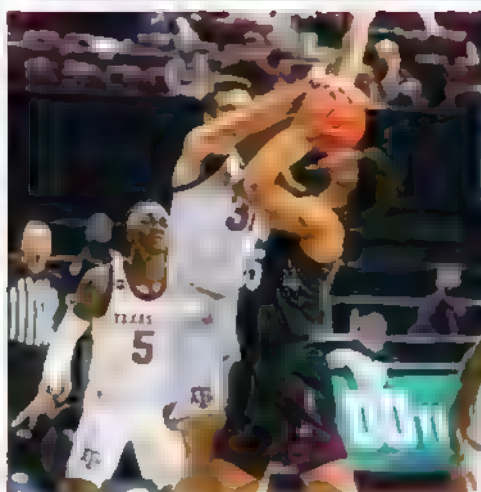
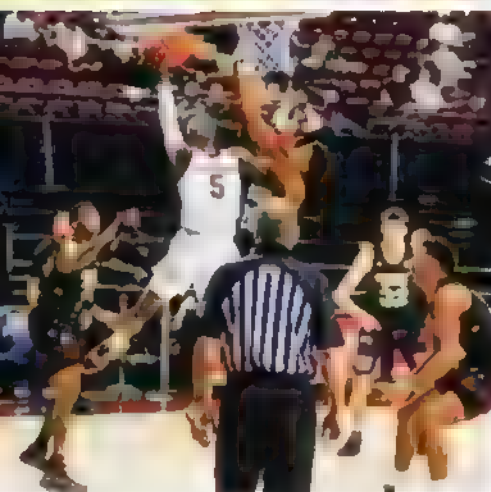
Tyra Gittens proved that she is best in the country by winning three medals at the NCAA Indoor Championships. First, she became the NCAA pentathlon National Champion with a collegiate-record score of 4,764 points. Then a day later, she won a Natty in the high jump and placed third in the long jump. The 26-points she earned for her team are the third most earned by any competitor in history at a NCAA championship meet. Gittens also became the first woman to win national championships in the pentathlon and high jump in the same meet. Photo by Aggie Athletics



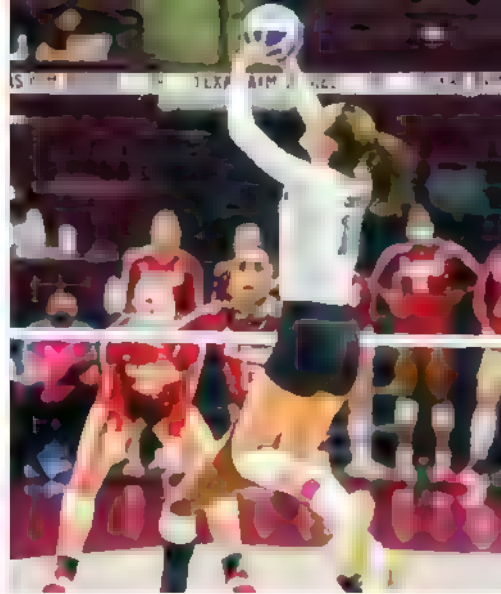
[EQUESTRIAN] The Aggies wrapped up the regular season with a 3-4 overall record and a 2-4 conference finish. The spring highlights included a win over #9 Baylor and #9 South Carolina. The team now sets their sights on the SEC Championship Mar 26-27 in Bishop, Georgia. The NCEA Championships are scheduled April 15-17 in Waco.



[BASEBALL] Texas A&M had a shaky start to the season as they lost their opening series to Xavier followed by a close loss to Abilene Christian. But a short drive to Round Rock seemed to right the ship as the Aggies hammered former Big 12 foes Baylor and Oklahoma in the Round Rock Classic. Since returning home the Aggies have won seven straight and are playing some really good baseball. Senior Dustin Saenz moved to the Friday Night starter role and has been solid for the Aggies. Bryce Miller became the Saturday starter and was recognized by Collegiate Baseball as one of their National Players of the Week after striking out 15 in seven innings of work against New Mexico State. Will Frizzell has a .407 batting average with 14 RBIs.



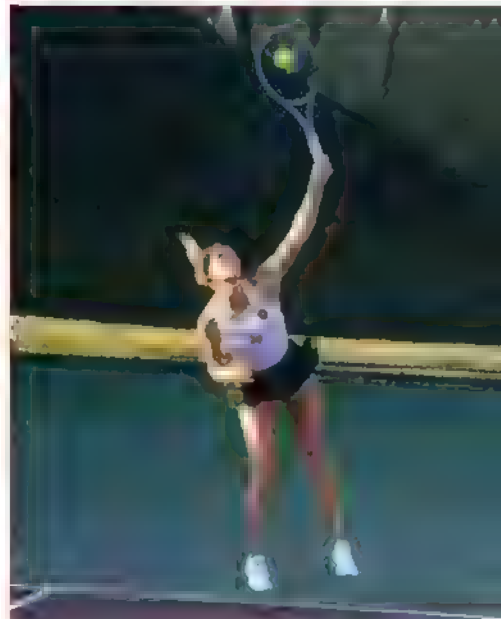
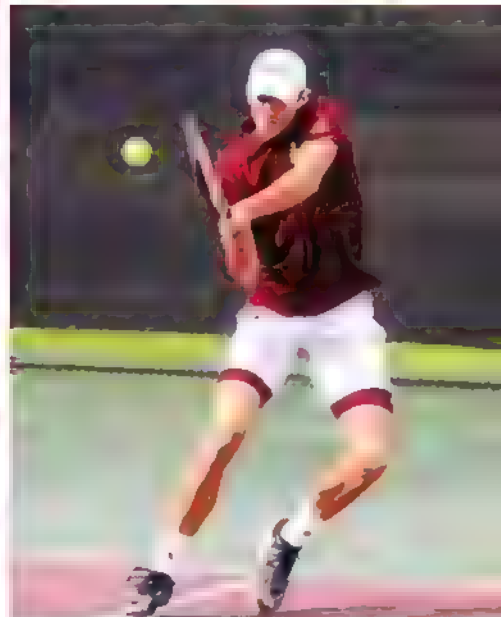
[MEN'S BASKETBALL] The men's basketball team's season finally came to an end when they lost to Vanderbilt in the first game of the SEC Tournament. Coach Williams' team lost the whole month of February to COVID-19. Not only did they lose games, but because of safety protocols they were limited to only 7 full practices during the month. The Ags finished 8-10 overall and 2-8 in the SEC. Buzz said after the last game, "Texas A&M deserves better and we're going to do better."



[VOLLEYBALL] The volleyball team has had their own COVID-19 issues, but have been perfect on the court going 4-0 during the spring. Sophomore Morgan Christon has led the team in kills for the sixth straight match in a row. Camille Conner continues to post double doubles as the talented senior has 32 total in her Aggie career. The Aggies are hoping to position themselves for a birth in the NCAA tourney.

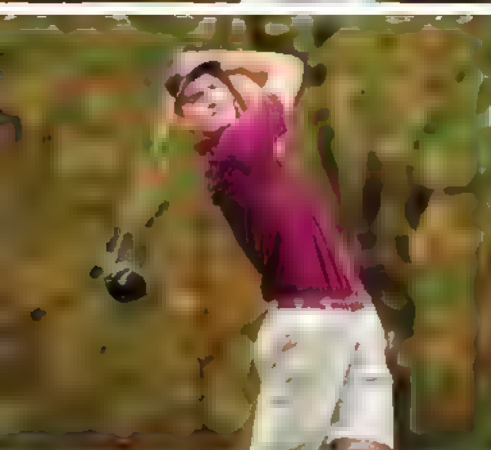
[MEN'S TENNIS] The Aggies sit at 10-3 with a 4-2 conference record. They have seven wins over top 25 teams. The Aggies signature win so far this spring was over #2 Baylor as they beat the Bears 4-3. Having lost to BU earlier in the season, the Aggies were fired up to avenge the loss on their home court. The Aggies won the doubles point; Vacherot, Aguilar, and Thomson added singles wins to give Texas A&M the victory.

[WOMEN'S TENNIS] It has been a challenging season for our team as they have had five matches postponed due to COVID-19. The Ags are currently 10-3 with a 2-1 SEC record. The team has been very successful on the court and is anxious to get out there and compete again. In their first conference home match of the season, they defeated Mississippi St 4-0. The team won the doubles point and then added singles wins by Faa-Hviding, Makarova and McBryde to clinch the victory.





[TRACK & FIELD] The women's team has had a record-breaking indoor season led by talented newcomer Athing Mu. In the final weekly rankings heading into the NCAA Indoor Championships, the girls are ranked #2 in the country. Seemingly, Mu breaks a record every time she steps on the track, and she is only a freshman. She was named SEC Runner of the Year and Freshman of the Year at the SEC Indoor Championships where she won the 800m title with a collegiate record time. Her teammate Tyra Gittens was named Field Athlete of the Year and won the high jump and long jump at the SEC Indoor Championship. Brandon Miller won the 800M race for the men at the SEC Championships as the Aggies swept the event. The men's team placed 9th and the women's team finished in 8th place.



[MEN'S GOLF] The Ags start the spring with two individual championships and a team win over arch rival Texas in dominant fashion. Dan Erickson won his second individual title at the 2021 Border Olympics. The team posted a 4- under par final round and won the tourney by eight strokes over second-place Texas. Junior Sam Bennett shot a 5- under final round in the Cabo Collegiate to earn his first career title. The team finished third by only three strokes behind top ranked Oklahoma.

[WOMEN'S GOLF] COVID-19 and the worst snow storm in Texas history were detrimental to our ladies' practices according to Coach Gaston. However, they were happy to get their first tournament of the spring in as they placed 13th in the ICON Invitational. They are looking forward to getting back to work and to getting in a rhythm.



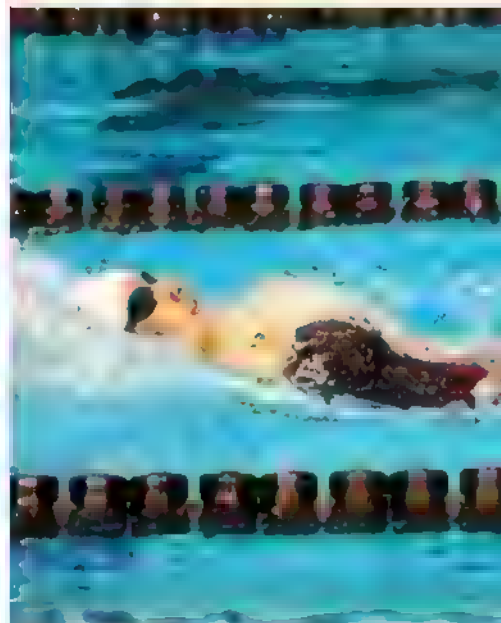
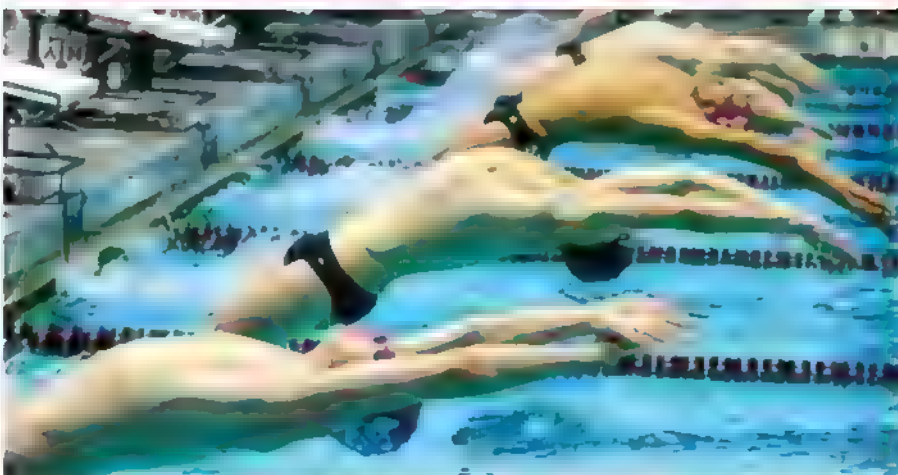
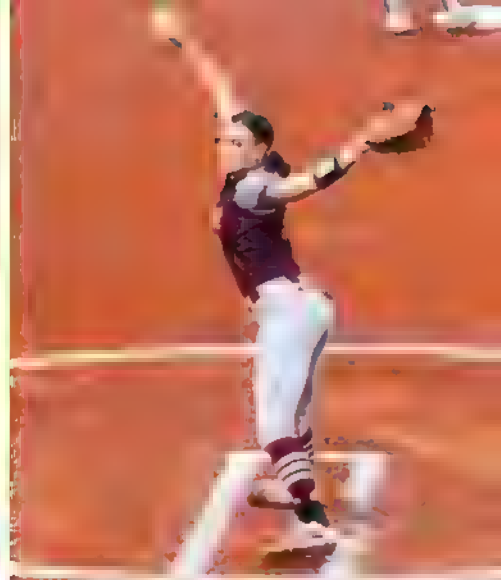
scoreboard



[SOFTBALL] Coach Evans has the softball team playing really well as they are currently 13-3 overall with SEC play right around the corner. Junior Haley Lee has already had three homeruns in a game twice this season, including a walk-off grand slam against Texas Southern. She is hitting an incredible .467 and currently has 18 RBIs and nine homeruns. Junior Makinzy Herzog is tearing it up in the circle with 5 wins already and has a .58 ERA. Kelsey Broadus threw a no hitter for the Aggies in a 1-0 victory over Campbell with 12 strikeouts!

[SWIMMING & DIVING] The men posted wins over #25 SMU and conference foe LSU as they wrapped up the regular season. At the SEC Championships the men came in fourth led by Junior Shaine Casas who was awarded with the Commissioner's Trophy as the top point scorer for the meet. The women's team won three meets this spring and came in sixth at the SEC Championships. Taylor Pike won a silver and bronze medal at the meet.

[SOCCER] The ladies opened up the spring portion of their schedule with a 1-0 exhibition win over North Texas. Barbara Olivieri scored the lone goal for the Aggies and picked up right where she left off in the fall. The Ags have four games currently scheduled for the spring before an adjusted NCAA tournament field is announced. During the break, the Aggies lost captains Jimena Lopez and Addie McCain, who both signed professional soccer contracts. Kendall Bates, Karling Sample and Katie Smith were named soccer captains for the spring.



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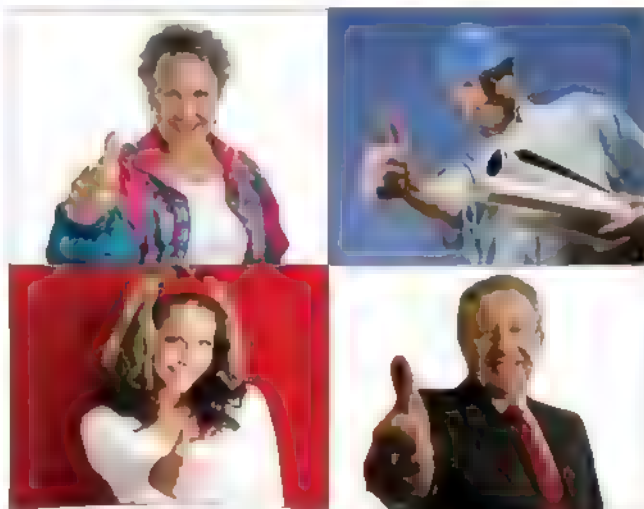
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JIMBO WRAPS UP #7 SIGNING CLASS

BY ROB HAVENS '88

JARDIN GILBERT



POSITION DEFENSIVE BACK	
HEIGHT 6'1"	WEIGHT 175
HIGH SCHOOL UNIVERSITY LAB	
HOMETOWN BATON ROUGE, LA	
Chose A&M over Alabama, LSU & OU. Earned spot on the All-American Bowl Roster. He played football and basketball in high school. As a senior helped lead his team to a state semifinal appearance in Louisiana.	

ELIJAH JEUDY



POSITION DEFENSIVE LINE	
HEIGHT 6'3"	WEIGHT 250
HIGH SCHOOL NORTHEAST	
HOMETOWN PHILADELPHIA, PA	
Chose A&M over Georgia, Alabama & Tennessee. He was a two sport athlete in high school in football and track and field (indoor 60 meters, high jump, long jump). Didn't play football in the fall but is an early enrollee for Texas A&M	

U JOHNSON



POSITION RUNNING BACK	
HEIGHT 5'10"	WEIGHT 205
HIGH SCHOOL CY FAIR	
HOMETOWN CYPRESS, TX	
Chose A&M over Alabama, Ohio State & LSU. He rushed for over 1200 yards last fall and scored 23 touchdowns. Johnson was named the District 17-6A Offensive MVP as a senior.	

JORDAN SPASOJEVIC-MOKO



POSITION OFFENSIVE TACKLE	
HEIGHT 6'5"	WEIGHT 335
JUNIOR COLLEGE SNOW COLLEGE	
HOMETOWN AUSTRALIA	
Chose A&M over Auburn, LSU & Oregon. He is the top-rated junior college offensive line prospect in the class. Although he spent last year at Snow College in Utah he will have four years of eligibility remaining at A&M.	

With the inception of the early signing day, most schools sign the bulk of their recruits in December. Jimbo Fisher and his staff were able to sign 19 of their new players on the first day of the Early Signing Period. We highlighted those players in our last issue. Coach Fisher completed the 2021 Signing Class with the addition of Jardin Gilbert, Elijah Jeudy, U Johnson and Jordan Spasojevic-Moko. After all was said and done, the Aggies moved up the ladder and finished with the #7 recruiting class in the country. Fisher loves the class that he and his staff were able to assemble and believes they are adding recruits that will make them into a championship caliber team. "We keep recruiting (well), and hopefully that translates into performance on the field, which is starting to get really good here, and we're enhancing that with the culture we're creating," Fisher said. "That can (lead) to SEC championships and national championships — those are our goals, and that's what we're trying to get to. To create competition from within that (means) hopefully the toughest games we play are the days we have in practice, when you're going (against) another great player across the ball from you."





CHAMPIONS

WOMEN'S HOOPS CAP OFF HISTORIC REGULAR SEASON WITH TITLE

BY ROB HAVENS '88

Texas A&M wrapped up its record setting season with a huge 65- 57 victory over South Carolina in front of the largest crowd to watch a game in Reed this year. The girls shed blood, sweat, and tears to win their first SEC Regular Season Championship with a program record of 22 wins and only one loss and a historic 13-1 finish in the conference.

Jordan Nixon showed the heart of a champion throughout the game. With just :16 remaining in the contest she banged her head on the floor, causing a severe gash around her eye, which left a stream of blood across the playing surface. As the medical staff quickly rushed to her side, Nixon made a quick change into a #12 uniform and stood on the sideline ready to go back in.

Her teammates had her back and brought home the win as she cheered them on from the sideline. I guess you could say this team was full of Masters of destiny as the veteran lineup of Kayla Wells, Aaliyah Wilson, N'dea Jones, Ciera Johnson & Anna Dreimane have all completed their undergraduate coursework and are working on their Masters at A&M. The group, along with senior Destiny Pitts, were recognized before the game for "Senior Night."

Leading into the game, the Aggies knew they would have their hands full with the talented Gamecocks that had beaten them the previous seven times in a row. In fact after the game, Coach Blair predicted USC would still be the favorites to win it all in San Antonio.

The game was tight throughout the first half but N'dea Jones carried the team in the first quarter, scoring eight points and collecting five rebounds to give the Ags a 17-14 edge after quarter number one. Aaliyah Wilson and Kayla Wells produced seven and four points respectively in the second, and the Cocks closed the margin to one as the buzzer sounded at half and the Aggies clung to a one-point advantage.

The Aggies came out of the locker room at half and increased the lead to fifteen with a combination of great offense and stellar defense. Anna Dreimane played big minutes for the Aggies and had two big blocks, as the South Carolina team battled back to within three.

Wilson scored two of her game-high 17 points on a driving layup that gave the Aggies some breathing room. The team defense also stepped it up and allowed Wells to ice the game

from the free throw line.

Texas A&M held USC to only 32.4% shooting from the field and 22.7% from three. They attacked Carolina inside and outscored them 36-26 in the paint. N'dea Jones broke Anriel Howard's rebounding record of 1,002 career rebounds in the second quarter of the game.

As the final buzzer sounded, the bench cleared and rushed the floor as team, coaches and staff embraced under colorful confetti that fell to the ground. Coach Blair got doused with a water bottle but was able to avoid a Gatorade shower. Gary addressed the crowd, and the players took turns with the mic thanking the 12thMan for their support. The entire team, including coaches and staff, then climbed the ladder and cut down the nets.

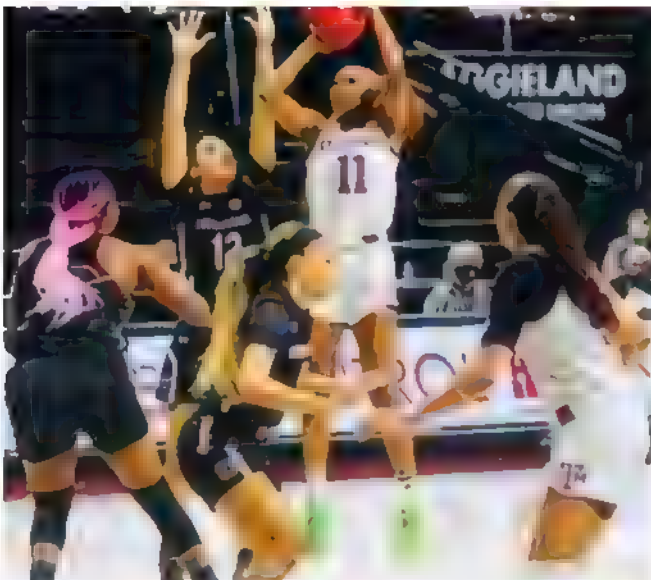
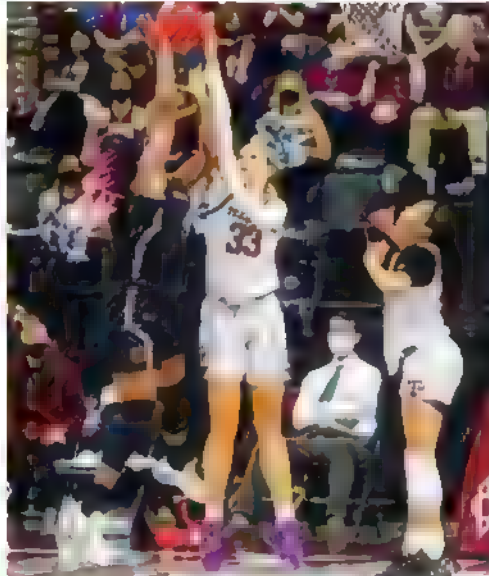
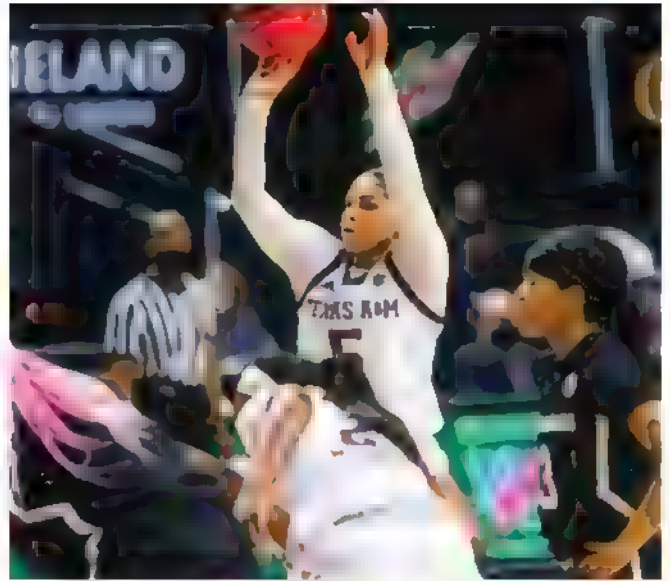
This was the first conference regular season championship for the program since the 2006-07 Big 12 Championship. It's only the sixth conference championship for the program. The Aggies finished the regular season on a 10 game winning streak.

After the game Coach Blair reminded everyone that his team was the first program to win an SEC Championship back in 2013 when they won the SEC Tourney. "We really wanted this, tournament championships are great, but the body of work which you have to do during the regular season is so important."

Aaliyah Wilson explained after the game "Everybody on the team has something they are good at or can do. I think that is what makes us so good. No team can just cut us off, they can't take the head off, because every player brings something to the table. From the one to the 15, because everyone has something special that they do, and I think we keep showing that every game. It is not always pretty, but we find a way, it shows our experience. I say we are veterans; a bunch of veterans and we have newcomers and they are learning as the process goes on. They are showing up every day in practice and they are making us better. That is really something that shows a testament to who we can be."

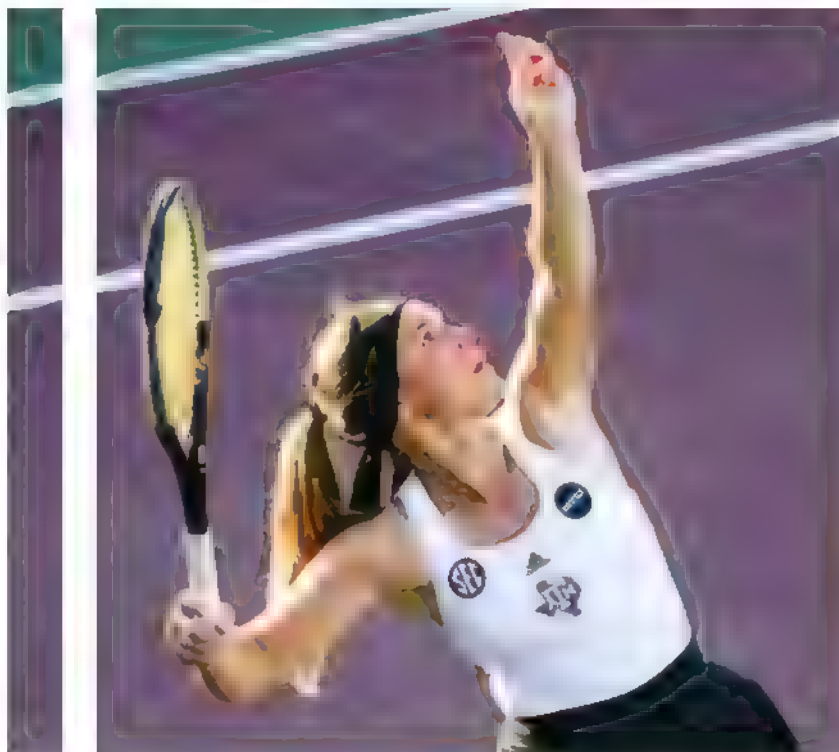
This team is ready to get to work on season number two as they battle for an SEC Tournament and NCAA Championship. The win against Carolina earned them a #2 ranking and potential one seed in the NCAA Tourney. We won't be surprised if this team goes out and brings home some more hardware. ■





Q & A

RILEY MCQUAID



Q: WHEN DID YOU START PLAYING TENNIS?

A: I've been playing since I could ever remember. I think my first tennis lesson was at two. Two years old with my dad.

Q: DID YOU PLAY OTHER SPORTS GROWING UP?

A: I kind of dabbled in soccer and gymnastics a little bit but I always knew that tennis was going to be my path for sure.

Q: TELL ME ABOUT COMING HERE TO A&M AND THE RECRUITING PROCESS THAT BROUGHT YOU HERE.

A: So it's actually quite – I wouldn't say it's a funny story because at the time it wasn't funny – but looking back it makes me happy. I was actually committed to a different school prior to committing to A&M. Things unfortunately, well now it's fortunate, but things had fallen through there and so the second semester of my senior year I was uncommitted. And in tennis that's pretty rare. Tennis players usually commit junior year. So I was in a little bit of a panic mode for a while just trying to be like, ok what school is going to take? What schools even have spots open? So I kind of did recruiting twice basically. My second time recruiting I had a phone call with Mark Weaver, our head coach, and I thought we had a really great connection. I came on a visit, and I just knew the second I stepped on campus this was a place I could totally see myself being a part of. I just fell in love with it and it's the best thing that ever happened to me truly.

Q: HAD YOU BEEN TO TEXAS BEFORE?

A: I had been to Texas maybe twice, but I was young. I was like maybe eight, and it was for a national tennis tournament. But I hadn't been back in a long, long time. But it was always a place I was drawn to in a way. I've always loved Texas, so I felt really at home.

Q: WHEN DID YOU START COMPETING IN TOURNAMENTS?

A: I won my first tournament when I was seven. But I was a part of like junior team tennis at my club I think at the age of five I think was my first match. So it's

kind of been my whole life. It's one of my favorite things, I love competing. I love the competitive aspect of tennis. So it's just something that's always kept me motivated to play.

Q: SO I READ IN YOUR BIO THAT YOU PLACED THIRD IN THE 2012 JUNIOR ORANGE BOWL IN CORAL GABLES. IS THAT AT THE ORANGE BOWL STADIUM THAT THE AGGIES WERE JUST IN?

A: (laughs) I wish it was that big, that would have been cool! We played at the University of Miami actually. But it's the same organization, same Orange Bowl. My trophy was a bowl of oranges, literally. That was a really big win for me when I was 12. That boosted my national ranking to number one. That was a super, super cool tournament for me, super fun. I know that that was what really made me realize that I could be really good at this little sport.

Q: TELL ME ABOUT YOUR TIME AT A&M SO FAR.

A: Oh it's been the best three and a half years of my life. Truly! I wouldn't change a thing. Every day being in Aggieland is like being a part of a community and being a part of something that is bigger than yourself. I have been really blessed to have amazing coaches and teammates here and amazing staff and support system that's really made Aggieland feel like home. Being so far away from home, it's challenging sometimes but Aggieland really feels like a home to me. Whenever I go home it's like a vacation now, and I always want to come back here. But I know I'm always going to be drawn to this place. Texas A&M holds a really special place in my heart and I'm so, so proud to call myself a part of the 12th Man.

Q: WHAT IS YOUR MOST MEMORABLE MATCH HERE AT TEXAS A&M?

A: Oooh that's a tough one, there has been so many. I can think of two. One of them was when we beat Vanderbilt, who was ranked #4 at the time at home. Under the lights, my whole team, we all just went out there and took care of business. I just looked at all six courts and knew we were gonna get it done. It came down to Rene, and rushing her after she





clinched that match was an indescribable feeling. Another top favorite was when we beat Texas my sophomore year to book our ticket into the Sweet 16 of the NCAA tournament. We went in there, definitely the underdog. We had gotten killed by them the year before, so to just got out there to take it to them on their court in Austin. That was super special and something I will always remember.

Q: SO IT'S DEFINITELY BEEN DIFFERENT OVER THE LAST FEW YEARS AND NOT PLAYING THEM AS OFTEN, WOULD YOU STILL CONSIDER TEXAS A RIVAL?

A: Oh 100%! I think the rivalry between us and Texas is so deep rooted and will always be there. It's unfortunate we don't get to play them as often as we can in all sports, but there's definitely that rivalry always.

Q: WITH COVID-19, DOES THAT ALLOW YOU TO COMEBACK FOR A FIFTH YEAR OR ARE YOU READY TO MOVE ON?

A: Right now I don't think that I am. I'll be graduating in August, and I think I'll just kinda move on with my life. But things can always change, and you never know what could happen with the season. We learned that last year. But as of now – it's not 100% – I really don't have a decision made, but I don't think I'll be returning for a fifth year.

Q: WHAT DO YOU WANT TO DO WHEN YOU GRADUATE?

A: I want to get a job in either medical device sales or in cyber security. I know that those are both very different fields, but I haven't really decided yet or zoned in on one. But I'm just starting to branch out and starting to look at companies and trying to figure out my next move. But I definitely want to stay in Texas, that's for sure.

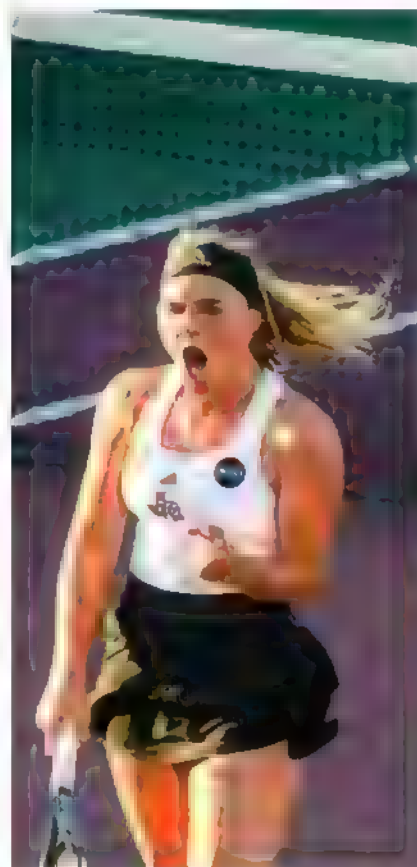
Q: WHAT'S BEEN THE TOUGHEST THING THAT YOU'VE HAD TO DEAL WITH DURING THIS PANDEMIC?

A: I think the biggest thing that's been hard is adapting to all of the change. Things are a lot different now with COVID. You know we are getting tested weekly, which we are really fortunate for us to know we are healthy and stuff. It's been tough like not being able to see our normal friends and other athletes. Our schedule is always changing. For instance, we were supposed to have a match this weekend that just got cancelled because the other team has a few cases. So always being willing to adapt has been something that has kept us on our toes. But I think our team has handled it really, really well. I think everyone has been really responsible. So it hasn't been too stressful but you know you always wonder when you go to take that test, ok, hopefully I'm negative. And then it's just crazy because we always want to make sure if we're going to get it, we want to get it doing the right things and not doing something reckless or stupid. Just adapting to all the change has been challenging, but I think our team has handled it really, really well!

Q: YOU RECENTLY WON THE DECIDING MATCH FOR THE TEAM VICTORY, TELL ME ABOUT THAT.

A: Oh that was a fun one! It had come down to me last year versus Kentucky, and I lost the match. It was the worst feeling I had ever had in my life. I felt like I had let my whole team down. So when it comes down to me last week at TCU, I really had no idea because three of the matches all ended within 30 seconds of each other. So I looked down and was like why is everyone standing on this court next to me. I had no idea I was the last match on and I was down 1-2 in the third when it came down to me.

But you know, honestly, I just really trusted in the training I've been doing and I really believed in myself, and I knew that I didn't want to have that feeling like I did in Kentucky the year before, and I really just battled every single point. I just trusted myself, I believed in myself and I knew that my teammates and my coaches believed in me and at the end of the day I just knew I was going to be tougher than that girl and I really knew I was going to win that match the whole time. So when that match point finally happened and I won it, it was definitely a sigh of relief and a huge weight was lifted off my shoulders. It was like the best feeling ever because I always wondered what that would feel like, and to have that now my senior year was pretty special ■



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ICE HOCKEY CLUB

BY ROB HAVENS '88

When you think of youth sports in Texas, football, basketball, baseball or soccer probably come to mind first. But in the northern United States and Canada, kids are introduced to the sport of ice hockey at a very early age. The president of the Texas A&M Ice Hockey Club, Peter McElaney, took to the ice when he was only two years old. While kids in Texas were learning how to field ground balls and throw touchdowns, Peter was in Massachusetts learning how to skate backwards and hit a slapshot.

While many children are able to play multiple sports at one time and even start playing a new sport as they get older, playing ice hockey requires years of training on the ice. Hockey players are some of the best athletes in sports. They have the ability to stop on a dime after racing across the ice, change direction in a split second, control a rubber puck with a stick, and shoot it into a net with pinpoint accuracy. Even some of the best athletes in the world would struggle to stay on their feet while skating across the ice.

The members of the Aggie ice hockey club have grown up on the ice and are

ecstatic to be able to play the game they love in the state of Texas. McElaney said, "Even though I know that my hockey career will at some point come to an end, I didn't want it to end after high school. After playing for nearly 15 years, it was something that I was super interested in being a part of at Texas A&M; not only would it allow me to become involved in an organization at the very start of my college career, the friendships and skills that I would gain along the way will stay with me for the rest of my life."

The current team has 30 members that hail from all over the globe. Over half of the team is in the College of Engineering, but they also have players studying everything from Sport Management to Biomedical Sciences and everything in between. They practice three times a week at Spirit Ice Arena in College Station. The practices are held late at night to allow students to finish classes, labs and homework before hitting the ice.

In the 2019-2020 season, the team won the Texas Collegiate Hockey Conference Championship. The league's members include the University of Texas, TCU, SMU, East Texas Baptist University, and Texas A&M. The team's main rival is UT, and during most seasons the two teams

compete for the "Texas Cup," which is awarded to the school that wins the most head-to-head games during the season. The Aggies took the last "Cup" going 5-0 against the 'Horns.

The 2019-2020 season also presented arguably one of the most important and high profile experiences that the Texas A&M Ice Hockey program has seen in its existence. The club played in front of a crowd of nearly 5,000 fans versus the University of Texas at the historic Cotton Bowl stadium in Dallas. It was the first time collegiate teams in the state played an outdoor stadium game.

In a normal season, the team plays 10 home games and 20 away games. They typically compete out-of-state on two trips per season. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, the team is currently holding skills practices while wearing masks, but competition for the spring has been canceled.



PHOTO COURTESY OF REBEKAH BING



Rec Sports

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PISTOL TEAM

BY ROB HAVENS '88

One of the best parts about covering Texas A&M Sport Clubs in our magazine is hearing inspiring stories from student athletes that are not just navigating through these tough times but are becoming stronger and better leaders as they forge their way through.

Texas A&M Pistol Team president, Benjamin Bryant, reminded us of this when we asked him what he liked best about being president of the club. He replied, "My favorite thing about being president of the team is the honor of being able to lead an organization that has been here for many years, to tackle the challenges that COVID-19 has brought on, and to continue our tradition of excellence."

The team was founded in 1976, and according to Bryant, the reason the club began was "to foster firearm safety and education as well as to promote intercollegiate competition in shooting sports."

The team typically consists of 20-30 members. However, COVID-19 affected their ability to recruit for the 2020-2021 season, so they currently have 14 members. They practice on the range two to three hours per week for drills and live fire, and they also engage in dry firing drills and physical fitness training.

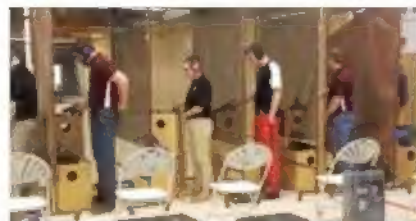
When it comes to competing, current members compete in Standard Pistol, Sport Pistol, and Air Pistol. The competitions are shot one-handed at varying distances (up to 50 meters).

Bryant told us, "The team motto is 'shooting is more than a sport...it is a discipline.' This is the mindset that it takes to be a good shooter. Total discipline in all aspects of the competition will set the great shooters apart from the average ones."

We asked Benjamin what his favorite experience has been since joining the team. He told us, "My personal highlight was getting to attend the 2020 Olympic Trials for air pistol. It was a phenomenal experience to be able to shoot toe-to-toe with the best shooters in the country. Several other team

members got to participate in the Trials as well, and I can imagine that was also a high point for them. My favorite traveling experience with the team, other than the Trials, was my first NRA Collegiate Nationals in 2019. It was that trip that allowed me to really start to make some more friends on the team and begin making a name for myself."

The club doesn't require previous experience in order to join. In fact, Bryant admits that he didn't have any competitive experience prior to signing up. The club has team members who joined having never shot a gun before but were eager to learn, as well as students who have been participating in international events their entire lives.





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